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Washington assesses 'new model' Ford

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Washington

As government buildings still vibrated with the Ford Cabinet shake-up, Washington took stock of the new skyline:

- An almost certain and possibly heated Senate confirmation contest loomed for George Bush, present U.S. representative in Peking and former chairman of the Republican National Committee, on the issue of politicizing his new post as head of the sensitive Central Intelligence Agency.

- Conservative Barry Goldwater (R) of Arizona thought Ronald Reagan ought to re-appraise his presidential political ambitions in the light of Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller's decision not to run in 1976, but Mr. Reagan reportedly gave a blunt reply, "I'm not appeased."

- Bipartisan questions rose whether Mr. Ford's "new team" members could master

their new posts — particularly the Pentagon — before the presidential election a year hence.

- Opinions differed on whether Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had gained or lost by the "Sunday shake-up": Republican conservatives took a wait-and-see attitude; Moscow expressed satisfaction; the Secretary of State himself asked to respond to reports that Ambassador Elliot Richardson is being groomed to succeed him; answered with a chuckle, "Certainly nobody told me."

Washington generally felt that the administration shake-up, on the technical side, whatever the merits of the shifts, was a flawed performance. An unexplained leak tipped off the media to what had been planned as a smooth transition, with the Rockefeller letter coming first and the announcement of team shifts following later. This resulted in a precipitate timetable.

President Ford had the embarrassing task of firing CIA head William Colby at 8 a.m. Sunday morning, and firing Defense Secretary James Schlesinger at 8:30, who met Mr. Colby on the way in. Neither, reports indicate, knew of the plan. Meanwhile, President Ford asked Mr. Colby to stay on as CIA director until Mr. Bush is confirmed. Mr. Colby agreed.

- No clear verdict had been reached over the success of what was widely felt to be President Ford's effort to change from a "nice guy" to a "take charge" image.

Mr. Ford has had a dubious press.

The Wall Street Journal, independent conservative, asked if the U.S. position had been weakened by the Schlesinger departure, and a news analysis linked the shake-up to his political advisers' "numbing conclusion: candidate Ford could well get beaten."

The Washington Star, independent conservative, is editorially glad to see Mr. Kissinger dropped as chief of the National Security Council, but wonders if he still has too much power.

Columnist George F. Will, independent conservative, calls the Schlesinger ouster "a foolish thing, done in a foolish way."

Liberal critics are sharper-tongued.

The New York Times and Washington Post, pillars of the Eastern establishment, argue that Mr. Ford may have shaken public confidence in himself, and columnist Joseph Kraft puts it bluntly "as to whether he has the brains to be president."

Strong defenders come to Mr. Ford's side across the country; but the first appraisal seems wonder and surprise. A new phase will begin when Mr. Ford's new team comes up for Senate confirmation, particularly Mr. Bush. This takes two forms.

Some question making the head of the sensitive CIA a former chairman of the Republican National Committee.

Secondly, Mr. Bush's unsuccessful campaign for senator from Texas in 1970 got a transfer of \$40,000 by wire money order from President Nixon's "Towerhouse" operation, thereafter called illegal, using a Houston advertising agency.

Sen. Frank Church (D) of Idaho, chairman of the Select Committee on Intelligence, said he would oppose the Bush nomination.